

***THE HONORABLE LAWRENCE JOHNSON
MAYOR, CITY OF TAYLORSVILLE
STATE OF THE CITY SPEECH 2017***

I. Introduction

Thank you so much for taking time out of your busy lives and commitments to be here this evening. I really appreciate it. My address today is based on my time in office as mayor. As most of you know, I've been the mayor of Taylorsville for the last three years. The State of the City address is a speech customarily given by the mayors of cities "from time to time," regarding the state or condition of the City.

In the first State of the Union address given on January 8, 1790, George Washington specifically talked about the "advancement of... commerce" and encouraged the "introduction of new and useful inventions." He talked about home-based business and "facilitating" roads between the distant parts of our country. He also said "Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness."

In the Spirit of George Washington's speech, I will cover some of the same subjects. I also hope that by providing more information,

timelines, figures, and facts to the residents, I will increase their knowledge and trust in local government.

Most of you who are familiar with me know that I love life. I truly do. I feel tremendously blessed. I love my family. I love my friends. I love my hometown.

I grew up here in Taylorsville. My mom, sister, and I lived with my grandparents on a small farm that was just a few blocks from where City Hall is now located.

As I have grown up, I have witnessed Taylorsville grow up as well. It's amazing to see all of the changes over the years. During all of my years living in Taylorsville, I can honestly say that I have never been more excited to live here in our wonderful community. There are so many remarkable things happening in the City.

Before I get into the details of my report this evening, I want to pause and thank the other elected officials who work so hard to make good decisions for the benefit of all of us. Several of them are here tonight. Please take a minute and chat with them here this evening.

I also want to take a minute and thank the administration and staff for what they do to make the City so great. So much of the work that they do goes unrecognized.

Most importantly, I want to thank the residents of Taylorsville who have trusted me with the sacred duty of serving as mayor. It has been one of the greatest blessings of my life serving in this role. I want you to know that I understand the significance of this office. I am putting my back into this job and working hard because I know that our community deserves it. House Speaker Paul Ryan said "Every successful individual knows that his or her achievement depends on a community of persons working together." I know that this is true and that is why all of us at City Hall work hard each and every day to try to improve the health, safety, and general welfare of our community.

Some of you know that before I became the mayor, I ran a small business, J&J Tire. It was a family-run business. I really enjoyed my work, but it was a challenge. I had to work hard to keep supplies on hand, hire and train the right staff, balance the books, and make payroll.

For those of you who have run a small business, you know what it takes to be successful.

When I was elected mayor, I decided to roll up my sleeves and get to work. I knew that I needed to approach the job of mayor with the same energy and enthusiasm that I did in my own company. I knew that I needed to work hard, get the right people in place, and carefully manage the public's business.

It was obvious to me that so much needed to be done. I knew that as a City we could make the decisions that would make the City more livable and business friendly. I also knew that we could do it without raising taxes or creating other burdens on our residents. Tonight, I would like to highlight some of the progress that we have made together over the last few years.

II. State of Economic Development

When I was elected, we were in the middle of a downturn in the economy and the City budget was very tight. It was therefore important to us in the City to broaden our tax base and cut out unnecessary City

expenses. As a City, we have worked to streamline government. We are now doing more with less.

We have contracted with the County and even the private sector to provide various services in order to save taxpayer money. We have reorganized various departments such as the senior staff, the courts, the attorneys' office, the building department, and the economic development department. Since I became mayor, by reorganizing these departments and making other hard decisions, **we have reduced government spending in these areas** by a total of \$1.1 million. Let me say that again: we have reduced government spending in these areas by a total of \$1.1 million!

We have also saved money by adjusting our approach to insurance. We have reduced the City's civil liabilities. In addition to these savings, we have worked hard to get out of litigation and to actively settle cases. Through this approach, we have saved hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In addition to reducing costs, we have actively sought to expand the City's tax base. Nearly every day, the economic development

director, Wayne Harper, and I promote the City to business and commercial developers. We travel to trade shows and seminars to promote the City. Each year, we attend the conference of the International Council of Shopping Centers (“ICSC”) in Las Vegas. It is the global trade association of the shopping center industry. It’s more than 70,000 members in over 100 countries include shopping center owners, developers, managers, marketing specialists, investors, retailers and brokers, as well as academic and public officials. For months, we plan and prepare in advance to successfully promote our City and our ideas at this conference. We have worked really hard to establish key relationships with brokers and investors. Each time we have attended the Conference with a well-organized plan of action, the City has benefited.

As everyone here in attendance tonight knows, there has been a significant amount of redevelopment in our City recently. For the last few years, we have worked to improve what was formally known as the Family Center. In May of 2014 at the ICSC Conference, we visited with Excel Finance about investing in the Family Center. We have since

developed relationships with S-Squared and Tri-gate Capital, who purchased the property from Excel Finance, and have worked hard to re-develop the Family Center, which is now known as the Crossroad of Taylorsville. Isn't the Regal Theater amazing? If you have not been there to see a movie, I highly recommend it! There is so much more that will be coming to the Crossroads of Taylorsville.

At ICSC in May of 2014, we started working hard to generate interest to improve the old Furniture Warehouse property. As a City, we used the tools available to us to kick-start redevelopment. Because of a relationship developed with David Werts at ICSC, and a creative agreement developed with him and the RDA, the property was sold late 2014, and redevelopment began. While still a work in progress, significant improvements have been made to what is now known as Legacy Plaza at 54th.

I first met John Erickson February 2014. We began working with him to develop one of the largest remaining parcels in the city. We visited developments of Erickson Living in Colorado, and creatively worked to develop a project which has balanced a substantial benefit

while minimizing its impact on the city. The purchase, sale, and development agreement were signed off by the City, September 2015. We are pleased that this development will soon break ground on the new Summit Vista life plan community. Summit Vista is over a \$450-million-dollar private development that will be built near 6200 South and 3200 West. There's nothing like it in the Salt Lake Valley. Since 2014, we have been busy working through zoning, a development agreement, and land sales to make this project happen.

At Summit Vista, residents will enjoy a collection of time-saving services, exceptional amenities and a residence for the future that, if needed, will take you beyond independent living. The focus on *Aging Successfully* will also help keep you active and engaged in life. Added to the exceptional amenities and services of Summit Vista will be the peace of mind that comes with an available on-site variety of care that will include independent living, assisted living, home care, nursing care, memory care, and rehabilitation services.

This important development will not only broaden the tax base of the City, but it will develop land that has been vacant since I was a

young boy growing up here in Taylorsville. It will also provide seniors with more living options as they approach retirement age.

One of the most exciting developments in the City over the past several years is the joint agreement with Salt Lake County to construct and operate a regional performing arts center here in the City of Taylorsville. Early 2012 the city began a process of bidding with Salt Lake County for a Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center. Early last year, Mayor McAdams notified me they would like to begin negotiations to build the Mid-Valley Performing Arts Center in Taylorsville. I am pleased we were able to successfully negotiate an agreement between us which was approved and funded by the Salt Lake County Council, December of 2016 to have the center built here on campus at City Hall. The center will bring more art and culture to the City for the residents to enjoy. Construction should begin late next year. Through conservative budgeting practices and by virtue of a favorable agreement that we negotiated, the City will not go into debt to construct the center. While the county will operate the center, the City has exclusive rights to use the center for certain days for city events, performances, and plays.

This Center will be one of the great cultural additions to the City. In addition to the cultural value, it will also attract others to Taylorville who will also use our restaurants and stores. This will add to the growing Taylorville local economy.

In the last few years, we have issued a large number of new business licenses. In the last three years, we have had a net increase of more than 200 business licenses in the City. Isn't that amazing? It is fascinating to see the amount of commerce going on in our City.

As you drive, walk, or bike through the City, you can see new restaurants on nearly every corner. Every single day, the Economic Development department is seeking to improve our community by bringing businesses here which are consistent with our values.

There are so many good things happening in the City. As the economic development improves, there are more options for the residents of the City. Our tax base also gets stronger. For the last three years, the sales tax collected by the City has improved significantly. I'm thrilled to report that the City has seen a sales tax increase of \$668,000. Not only is consumer confidence up, but others who live outside of

Taylorsville are shopping and spending money in our City. I don't even have to leave the City to eat where I want to eat or shop where I want to shop.

III. State of Community Development

Over the last three years, we have focused on beautifying and improving our City. Every year, we have budgeted to add modern walls and fencing along major roadways. We have also focused on new gateway signage and other markers. We also have an annual sidewalk fund that we use to install, upgrade, or repair sidewalks throughout the City. We have upgraded city parks, added new parks, and worked with the county to improve the parks that they operate within the City.

Specially, some of the things we have done include the following:

1. To beautify the City, we have completed a wall beautification project on 2700 West.
2. To make safer walking routes for school children and others, we added a fence on 1300 West on the canal road between 4800 and 5400 South.

3. To make Redwood Road more appealing, we added more decorative walls.
4. We continue a city-wide cleanup and Earth Day collection event.
5. We maintain a neighborhood dumpster program.
6. We provide dump vouchers to promote home clean up.
7. We continue to utilize the leaf-bag program.
8. We have also updated and enhanced our graffiti removal program.

It is important to me, as Mayor, to clean and beautify our City and keep Taylorsville a great place to raise a family.

In addition to these programs and improvements, we have made significant upgrades to our parks.

When I took office, an opportunity presented itself to create the first City owned park in District 1. We were able to negotiate the purchase of the old Cabana Club, which was a small privately owned swimming pool that was simply falling apart. The City has worked

closely with the community to create the new park, which is desperately needed.

We have updated Millrace, Vista Park, Labrum, Bennion, and Azure Parks. These upgrades include new playgrounds, BBQers, a pickle-ball court, new pavilions, additional benches and trees, improved irrigation systems, new trails, signage, and lighting. These updates have been well received and appreciated by the community.

In addition to the upgrades at the parks, there are several updates happening at the Senior Citizen Center. The senior center will be receiving an addition on the west side of the building. We are currently in the process of bidding for the construction of a new wood burning and crafts room. Construction will begin on the room shortly. We are also saving money and have plans to add an exercise pool at the center. These important improvements have been paid for by using CDBG grant money from the federal government. We love the seniors in our community and we appreciate all that they do to make our community better.

Our community members have needs that need to be met. The Food Pantry is an excellent example of a public-private partnership to meet one of those needs. The Food Pantry is staffed with volunteers who work hard to help other people. The City has provided recourses from the block grant program to help those in our community who need it the most. I'm really proud of those who work coutless hours at the Food Pantry to help those in need.

One of the things that I like best is going into our neighborhood schools. In 2014, while attending a Mayor's Conference in Washington, DC, I became familiar with the Aerogardens. For those of you who do not know, the Aerogardens grow plants naturally in ideal conditions that allow them to grow 10 times faster than plants grown in good-quality potting soil. The Growing Together program was established to help students learn more about the science of plant growth as well as the benefits of eating fresh, healthy, home-grown food. I felt strongly this program should be brought to Taylorsville elementary schools.

Upon receiving a commitment from AeroGrow International to send a total of 18 Aerogardens, it was time for us at the City to work. I

reached out to the school principals at many of our elementary schools, where each school would receive six Aerogardens with lettuce seed kits. Next, we set up dates to meet with the students and explain a little bit about this great program and the benefits of healthy eating. The program has been well received. I got thank-you notes from many students and was invited to a salad party at Vista Elementary where students used the lettuce grown in their classroom along with additional ingredients to make a delicious and healthy salad.

This was one of the high points for me as Mayor of Taylorsville. Personally, I like to talk at and attend programs at the schools. Helping the schools in Taylorsville is one of my highest priorities.

We also have a strong police presence in our schools. The police presence deters wrong behavior, and police officers provide a positive role model for students. I am especially grateful for the impact of Detective Scott Lloyd, who spends so much time in schools and throughout our community to make it a better place.

The City has also reorganized the Code Enforcement program. The City is proactively working with home owners and businesses to

keep their properties clean and compliant with state and local regulations. Our well-trained staff works with people who are struggling to keep up with their yards or businesses. They also offer friendly reminders regarding snow removal and even building sign requirements. In some cases, when property owners allow their property to adversely affect the rest of the community, the City has a hearing officer who hears claims and issues orders to clean up blight. This process is effective and is a cost savings to the City.

Sometimes issues are very complicated in communities like ours. That is why I appointed a problem-solving task force made up of code enforcement, animal control, police, fire, city attorney's office, building officials, and others to solve the most difficult problems. This task force has been one of the most effective teams at the City.

IV. State of Transportation

Our City has some of the busiest roads and intersections in the state. Because of this, we are constantly seeking to improve the flow of transportation in the City. We are working closely with UDOT to

improve Bangerter Highway. We also have asked the state to redesign less-effective intersections. Progress is being made.

Here are some of the projects that are currently in the works:

1. We have secured funding and are starting to work on the 4500 South BRT. We are working with key stake-holders now and are in the design phase.
2. We are excited to report that the Bangerter Interchange at 5400 South is moving from the planning stages into the construction phase. This will move traffic along even faster in this area.
3. We have also increased funds for road maintenance throughout the City.
4. We successfully negotiated the removal of 4015 West Median thru-turns in conjunction with the 5400 South Bangerter Highway Interchange.

As always, we are working with UTA to improve bus routes among our City, West Valley, and Murray. We are also working to improve busing services between Taylorsville and the south end of the county.

V. The State of Public Safety

My number one priority as mayor is the safety of our residents. Because of this, I have personally overseen a project to reevaluate the

safety of our crosswalks and school zones. As a result of this review, we have made significant and necessary improvements. Specifically, we have begun to add or upgrade flashing lights and overhead lighting to crosswalks and school zones.

We have updated a lighting maintenance program. During our study, we found hundreds of street lights that needed attention. We have currently repaired over 400 lights this past year.

Also, rather than just reacting to situations, public works and other city departments are proactively reviewing issues every week.

Our superb police chief, Tracy Wyant, recently reported that morale is high in the police department. He also said that officers want to serve in our City. Over the last few years, we have funded a new officer each year. We have added one new sergeant and two new officers. We have also added more safety equipment and tactical gear to protect our schools in the event of a problem. We appreciate our officers so much and all that they do. It is also important to note that over the last few years, crime has declined 10% in our city. We all

know that this is a direct result of the hard work of our police department.

In addition, to the police, we appreciate our firefighters and other first responders. They are truly the best. We are excited for the construction and completion of the new fire station 117 located on Redwood Road. It has five bays, houses more personnel, and has state of the art apparatus and equipment for improved response time. I am also happy to report that after state and internal audit reviews; new staff have been hired at UFA. I was part of the committee that hired Chief Dan Petersen from outside of the agency. Under his leadership, organizational changes and development are taking place. Overhead at UFA is being reduced. Currently, a strategic plan with community and employee support/buy-in is being developed. We are seeking to re-establish relationships of trust with UFA and the communities it serves. Other elected officials and I will be assisting as the UFA continues to make improvements.

I also want to briefly mention the veterans from our community. Taylorsville has a rich tradition of military service. Inside City Hall,

you will find displays acknowledging the service of our veterans. In front of the main doors of City Hall is a touching veteran's memorial. Over the last few years, we have been fortunate to host a regional Veteran's Day program. I hope that one day we can be chosen to do it again.

VI. The State of the Arts, Sports, and Other Improvements

As Mayor, I have sought to actively listen to the concerns of the citizens. Because of this we are working on upgrading our trails, pedestrian facilities, and parks within the City. Much of this work is already done.

Our Youth City Council and Ambassador Program has provided service and leadership opportunities for our youth to become more involved in local government. These young people add so much to the City. They are very helpful to us as elected officials. The City provides three scholarships to these students every year. We appreciate them so much.

I am also happy to announce that we are currently negotiating with the Taylorsville Arts Council and the Salt Lake Community College to

partner with and create more opportunities for the arts. We are making investments with the college to improve the outdoor amphitheater facility. We plan to use this facility more often for various productions.

Taylorsville Dayzz continues to be one of most loved and well attended events in the City. As a community, we are so grateful to Representative Jim Dunnigan and those who work with him to make this amazing event happen year after year.

We also have a rich tradition of sports in Taylorsville including baseball, softball, and other sports. We now have an NBA D-League professional basketball team, the Salt Lake City Stars, that play at Salt Lake Community College. I'm also happy to report that Taylorsville is home to the junior college 2016 National Champion Men's Basketball team when the Bruins won the title last year.

VII. No Tax Increases

When I ran for mayor a few years ago, I made a commitment that we would prioritize and spend money wisely. I promised the community that we would not need to increase taxes. At the time, it was a tough economic climate for all of us. I was worried that people were

paying all that they really could pay and then some. I'm proud of the fact that we have done all that we have discussed here today without a tax increase.

Since I was elected as mayor, we have sought to reduce governmental spending by simplifying, by contracting services, and by streamlining government. I can honestly say that we are doing more with less. Services have not been dropped, but rather they have improved.

Also, during my time as Mayor, we have not incurred any new debt for financing various projects. Every new project has been paid through conservative budgeting practices and saving money. Also, in the last three years, we have reduced the City's debt obligations from \$12.9 million to \$8.6 million.

Lastly on the City finances, our strategy was not to raise taxes, but to broaden the City's tax base. I'm thrilled to report that we have been successful in this effort. As I mentioned earlier, the City has seen a sales tax increase of \$668,000, which is up from 2014.

This is new money into the City and has been used to fund the above-mentioned projects. We are working on ever-increasing the tax base for the City to keep the burden as low as possible for the residents.

VIII. Transparency, Public Outreach, Social Media

As a City, we are seeking to be transparent and do the public's business in the daylight. We want to be open, communicating, and accountable. We are actively seeking to operate in such a way that it is easy for our community to see what actions are performed and how their money is spent.

As you know, we are open and available to the press and the public and we are trying to be more transparent than what is required by law. We are careful to always hold public hearings and notice important events.

We are actively seeking to find ways to communicate with the community. We provide public information in the Journal. We are constantly working to push out more information to the public. The City has a Facebook account and a Twitter account. These social media tools

are used to push information to residents. These tools are also valuable to communicate with residents during an emergency.

IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, we have been pleased in recent years with new businesses making Taylorsville their home. I am excited about the new businesses on the horizon, and trust the new improvements planned for Taylorsville will make this community a home we can all be proud of. The ancient Greeks had to take an oath before becoming a citizen of their community. They had to swear to “leave the city not less--but more beautiful than [they] found it.”

I’m happy to report that collectively, we are making our community better than we found it. As resident, and Mayor of this Great City, it is my main goal to make Taylorsville the very best community in this Valley, to live and raise a family. I’m very satisfied that is what is happening in the City of Taylorsville at this time. Thank you for being here this evening.

I appreciate your ongoing support. Thank you for what you do to make our City a special place to live.